

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Spokane's *Feet on the Street* Cart Tagging Program—Summer 2020
part of Spokane County's *Recycle Right* outreach campaign

What is the *Feet on the Street* cart tagging study?

This program is just one activity the City of Spokane and Spokane County are doing to reduce contamination in curbside recycling. Contamination is when a recycling cart has non-recyclable items in it. Contamination drives up operation costs, can damage equipment and can be unsafe for haulers and recycle center employees. With funding from *The Recycling Partnership*, workers will leave informational tags on the recycling carts of selected routes. Tags will provide feedback to residents about any contamination present in their cart. The routes will be monitored for 4 consecutive weeks. The contents of the collection trucks will be evaluated before and after the cart tagging study to see if the cart tags helped to reduce contamination.

How are routes chosen to be in the study?

15 City routes (about 1 in 5 total City routes) and 15 routes within the County (about 1 in 5 County routes) were chosen for this cart tagging study, using information about historic contamination levels.

When will I need to have my recycle cart out at the curb on my service day?

Even if you know the recycling truck doesn't come down your street until later in the day, we would still like everyone to have their recycle carts at the curb by 5 a.m. on your regular service day as the taggers will be checking carts before the trucks come by.

What is the tag on my cart and what does it mean?

The tag is also called an “**Oops Tag**” and it's an informational card that will be attached to your cart's handle by our *Feet on the Street* workers to give you feedback about the items in your recycling cart. If there are specific items in your cart that are not recyclable, the tag will identify those.

For carts serviced by Waste Management and Sunshine Disposal and Recycling, the tag is an informational flyer given to educate residents about the most problematic non-recyclable items found in recycling carts. The goal is to reduce curbside recycling contamination, to safeguard the health and safety of workers and keep the recycling system running efficiently.

Will I be charged extra if there are things that don't belong in my recycle cart?

If taggers notice a large amount of contamination in a City of Spokane recycling cart, you may receive a tag that will notify the drivers to reject your cart. In that case, you may be charged a modest fee as the cart will have to be dumped as garbage. This practice is in place to encourage residents to be more

careful about what they put in their recycling cart. Because the tags used by Waste Management and Sunshine Disposal and Recycling are purely informational, carts serviced by these haulers will not be rejected at this time.

[When does this study begin and end? Can I see results of the study?](#)

The study is intended to take place May through November 2020. Cart tagging will wrap up in September and data analysis will be completed in November. Results will be posted on my.spokanecity.org and spokanecountysolidwaste.org.

[Who do I contact if I have questions?](#)

For general questions, city residents can call the MySpokaneCity customer service representatives at 311, and County residents can call the County's Recycling Hotline at 477-6800 (calls answered Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5pm). Residents can also check the City and County websites and social media accounts.

[What is our current rate of contamination in recycling and what is our goal?](#)

The average percentage of contamination currently in Spokane County's curbside recycling program is 13%. There are some routes higher than that and a few lower. The goal in the City of Spokane is to reduce that to 5% by 2021. The top 5 offenders (items put in the recycling cart that are not recyclable) in the region are: plastic bags/film, tanglers (hoses, chains, etc.), food/liquid, batteries, and to-go cups/lids.

[If I can't put plastic bags in my cart, what can I do with them instead?](#)

Try not to collect plastic bags if you can. Reduction is always preferable. If you do have clean plastic bags, many retailers will take those back. Look for a collection box inside the door of your store as you go inside. If your store doesn't take them back and you can't reuse them as trash can liners or to pick up after pets, they should go into the garbage.

[Why can't I bag my recyclables? I want to keep my cart clean.](#)

If you recycle correctly by emptying all containers of food and liquid, the cart should remain clean and odor free. If bagged or boxed recyclables are placed in the recycling carts, the recyclables are treated as contamination/garbage and will be sent to the Waste to Energy facility or landfill, driving up program costs and reducing efficiency. Recyclables must be clean, dry, and loose in the cart in order to be recycled properly.

[What if I don't want you checking my recycling cart?](#)

Logistically, due to the large number of households we have to contact throughout the course of the study, we can't honor individual requests to exempt carts. We need comprehensive information on all carts throughout the selected routes in order to collect unbiased information, to inform future management considerations and reduce curbside contamination. We appreciate your cooperation and patience throughout the study, and hope you gain helpful information as a result of it. Please notify us by contacting us through 311 or the County's Recycling Hotline at 477-6800 if you have feedback about the study. We'd love to hear from you.